

Norway's response to the threat of terrorism continued to raise questions in 2014 about the balance between rights and security. In late July, in response to an elevated terror threat warning issued by Norwegian authorities, the authorities imposed six days of heightened security that included closing the country's air space, increasing armed police presence in public spaces, and tightening border and immigration controls—the last of which was made permanent. While the exact nature and origin of the threat was not revealed, government sources speculated it concerned radicalized fighters, particularly from Syria, returning to Norway using European passports. Three such Norwegian citizens were arrested in May on terror charges.

A number of significant demonstrations took place in 2014. Most notably, 5,000 Norwegians joined an antiextremism demonstration in August arranged by Norwegian Muslims against the Islamic State militant group (IS) and against the Norwegian radical group the Prophet's Ummah.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 40 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

Norway's unicameral parliament, called the Storting, has 169 members who are directly elected for four-year terms through a system of proportional representation. The constitutional monarch, currently King Harald V, appoints the prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Storting. While the monarch is officially the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, his duties are largely ceremonial.

The Conservative Party gained the most ground in the 2013 elections, winning 48 seats—an increase of 18 seats over the 2009 election. The Progress Party lost 12 seats, but retained 29 seats, which helped it form a coalition with the Conservatives. The Labor Party remains the largest party in parliament with 55 seats, though its loss of 9 seats prompted it to form a coalition with opposition members for the first time in eight years.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16

A range of political parties operates freely in Norway. Generally, political power has alternated between the Labor Party and Conservative-led coalitions.

The indigenous Sami population, in addition to participating in the national political process, has its own parliament, the Sameting, which has worked to protect the group's language and cultural rights and to influence the national government's decisions about Sami land and its resources. The Sameting is comprised of 39 representatives who are elected for four-year terms. The national government has a deputy minister charged with specifically handling Sami issues.

C. Functioning of Government: 12 / 12

Norway remains one of the least corrupt countries in the world, ranked 5 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, isolated incidents of bribery and misconduct have occurred, and Norway's role in the international energy and mining industries has seen particular scrutiny. Senior police superintendent Eirik Jensen was arrested and charged with gross corruption in February 2014. Jensen allegedly helped smuggle at least 1,000 pounds of cannabis into Norway and taking bribes from drug dealers totaling \$2 million.

Civil Liberties: 60 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice. In an effort to promote political pluralism, the state subsidizes many newspapers, the majority of which are privately owned and openly partisan. The government does not impede internet access.

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and respected in practice. The monarch is the constitutional head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, which counts 75 percent of Norwegians as members. A 2012 constitutional amendment separated state and church, placing the Lutheran Church on par with all other denominations in Norway, and absolving the requirement that half the cabinet be members of the Lutheran Church. All religious groups must register with the state to receive financial support, which is determined by size of membership. Students must take a course on religion and ethics focusing on Christianity, although this is thought to violate international human rights conventions.

There was an uptick in threats against mosques in 2014. Ubaydullah Hussain, former spokesperson for the radical Norwegian religious group the Prophet's Umma, was convicted in February 2014 and sentenced to 120 days in prison for threats he made against two journalists in 2012. In July 2014, he was charged with incitement to violence by the Oslo District Court, but was acquitted in October.

While official statistics do not distinguish among different religious groups that are targeted in religion-based hate crimes, anecdotal evidence indicates a rise in anti-Semitic violence and harassment. A report from the Anti-Defamation League found that Norway had the highest levels of anti-Semitism among Scandinavian countries. A new special police unit was founded in February to strengthen police efforts against hate crimes.

Academic freedom is respected and private discussion is not restricted.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

The constitution guarantees freedoms of assembly and association. In August, 5,000 people, including the leaders of Norway's major political parties, joined an antiextremism demonstration against IS and the regional group Prophet's Umma in Oslo, organized by moderate Norwegian Muslims. Norwegians are very active in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Labor unions play an important role in consulting with the government on social and economic issues, and approximately 53 percent of the workforce is unionized, with 93 percent being members of the four main

unions. The right to strike is legally guaranteed, except for members of the military and senior civil servants, and is practiced without restrictions. All workers have the right to bargain collectively. A teachers' strike in August 2014 affected more than 100,000 students and 9,000 teachers for two weeks. The National Association of Schools and the Teachers' Union reached an agreement on working hours that was accepted by national ballot in mid-September.

F. Rule of Law: 16 / 16

The judiciary is independent, and the court system, headed by the Supreme Court, operates fairly at the local and national levels. The king appoints judges on the advice of the Ministry of Justice. The police are under civilian control, and human rights abuses by law enforcement authorities are rare. Prison conditions generally meet international standards, and, in many cases, exceed them. Norway's 20 percent recidivism rate is one of the lowest in the world.

Two terrorist attacks that claimed 77 lives in 2011 prompted hostility toward Norway's multicultural agenda and its supporters. Norwegian right-wing fundamentalist Anders Breivik killed eight people in Oslo that year with a car bomb and then shot and killed 69 people attending a Labor Party summer youth camp. In July 2014, another right-wing Norwegian extremist and heavy metal musician informally connected to Breivik, Kristian "Varg" Vikernes, was found guilty in France of incitement to racial hatred.

Immigration to Norway has increased fivefold since the 1970s, and more than 10 percent of Norway's population was foreign-born in 2014. Recent immigrants include asylum-seekers predominantly from Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, and Eritrea. By year's end, 11,480 people had applied for asylum in Norway, a record high, resulting in housing shortages for asylum seekers. Approximately 6,000 asylum seekers whose applications were denied but who remained in Norway illegally were forcibly repatriated in 2014. It was a move in line with the government's increasingly conservative immigration policies, and it highlighted issues that remain divisive in Norway.

In July, Norway experienced six days of heightened security measures, including closed airspaces, tighter border control (which was made permanent), and the significant presence of armed police in public spaces. Anonymous government sources confirmed in the media in late 2014 that four individuals affiliated with IS were headed for Norway with the intention of seizing a private residence and performing a taped beheading on Norwegian soil. The terror threat was downgraded to normal level by the end of July.

The national government supports Sami-language instruction, broadcast programs, and subsidized newspapers in Sami regions.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 16 / 16

Although Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), citizens within the European Economic Area (which includes all EU states plus Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein) do not need a residence permit to work in Norway.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman is responsible for covering all forms of discrimination and for enforcing the country's Gender Equality Act, the Anti-Discrimination Act, and other laws against discrimination. The Gender Equality Act provides equal rights for men and women. A 2013 law, set to take effect in 2015, mandates gender-neutral conscription for the armed forces, making Norway the first North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member to include women in the draft. In 2013, women won nearly 40 percent of seats in parliament.

Norway is a destination country for human trafficking for the purposes of labor and sexual exploitation. However, according to the U.S. State Department's 2014 *Trafficking in Persons* report, the country remains a leader in antitrafficking efforts.

A gender-neutral marriage act passed in 2009 grants Norwegian same-sex couples identical rights as opposite-sex couples, including in adoption and assisted pregnancies. In April 2014, the National Council narrowly voted down a proposal to allow same-sex marriages to be performed or blessed by the clergy of the Lutheran Church, reflecting continued disagreement within the church on the issue.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)